

Message Text

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13-12

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FM AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2545

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L THESSALONIKI 0066

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR UR GR

SUBJECT: REPORTED SOVIET "FRIENDSHIP OFFENSIVE"

REF: ATHENS 1244 (NOTAL)

1. A NUMBER OF RECENT SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN THESSALONIKI WOULD APPEAR TO TIE IN WITH PROSPECTIVE SOVIET "FRIENDSHIP OFFENSIVE" REPORTED REFTEL.
 2. THESSALONIKI BRANCH OF "GREEK-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION", DORMANT DURING JUNTA YEARS, WAS REVIVED ON NOVEMBER 5, 1975 AND HAS ESTABLISHED OFFICES IN DOWNTOWN THESSALONIKI. INTERESTINGLY, PASOK MAYOR OF THESSALONIKI, MR. PAPADOPOULOUS, IS HONORARY CHAIRMAN.
 3. WE HAVE ALSO NOTED WHAT WE CONSIDER TO BE SLIGHT INCREASE IN OFFICIAL SOVIET VISITS TO AND EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN NORTHERN GREECE. SOVIET AMB TO ATHENS HAS BEEN HERE TWICE SINCE LATE FALL OF 1975, ONCE IN CONNECTION WITH
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TRIP TO MT. ATHOS, THE OTHER TIME TO ATTEND THESSALONIKI

FUR FAIR. ALSO, SOVIET DELEGATION, HEADED BY NICOLAI BORISENKO (PHONETIC), SECRETARY OF UKRANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER, ACCOMPANIED BY BORIS ANDREEV, SECRETARY OF LENINGRAD CP, PAID CEREMONIAL VISIT TO THESSALONIKI ON NOVEMBER 20. DURING STAY HERE, BORISENKO ANDREEV DELEGATION LAID WREATH AT ALLIED CEMETERY, CALLED ON THESSALONIKI MAYOR AND VISITED KKE EXTERIOR OFFICES.

4. FINALLY, WE CANNOT DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY THAT SOVIETS ARE MAKING PROXY EFFORTS TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE IN NORTHERN GREECE THROUGH BULGARIAN CONSULATE GENERAL SINCE SOVIETS HAVE NO REPRESENTATION OF THEIR OWN HERE. UBIQUITOUS GREEK-SPEAKING BULGARIAN CONSUL GENERAL PETER SLAVTCHEV APPEARS TO HAVE ESTABLISHED WIDE RANGE OF CONTACTS HERE AND GETS GOOD LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF HIS VARIOUS ACTIVITIES. HE HAS ALSO BEEN EFFECTIVE IN LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR RECENT GOODWILL VISITS BY BULGARIAN MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS TO VARIOUS NORTHERN GREEK CITIES (KAVALA, ALEXANDROUPOLIS, ETC.).

5. HOWEVER, EFFORTS BY BULGARIAN CONSUL GENERAL TO ESTABLISH SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NORTHERN GREEK CITY OF SERRES AND BULGARIAN CITY OF BLAGOEVGRAD (PHONETIC) HAVE BEEN QUIETLY SHELVED AFTER SMALL BUT VOCAL SEGMENT OF SERRES POPULATION OBJECTED TO RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE OF BULGARIAN ACTIONS DURING GREEK CIVIL WAR. THIS SENTIMENT AGAINST THESE ACTIVITIES, WHICH STILL REMAINS STRONG HERE, AS EVIDENCED BY LOCAL ANNUAL COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONIES OF VICTORIES OVER COMMUNISTS, MAY BE AS MUCH OF AN OBSTACLE TO THE "FRIENDSHIP OFFENSIVE" AS THE SOVIET TILT TOWARD TURKEY. NEGROPONTE

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